



# Southeast Asian Nations Gain Independence

## MAIN IDEA

**ECONOMICS** Former colonies in Southeast Asia worked to build new governments and economies.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The power and influence of the Pacific Rim nations are likely to expand during the next century.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Ferdinand Marcos
- Corazón Aquino
- Aung San Suu Kyi
- Sukarno
- Suharto

**SETTING THE STAGE** World War II had a significant impact on the colonized groups of Southeast Asia. During the war, the Japanese seized much of Southeast Asia from the European nations that had controlled the region for many years. The Japanese conquest helped the people of Southeast Asia see that the Europeans were far from invincible. When the war ended, and the Japanese themselves had been forced out, many Southeast Asians refused to live again under European rule. They called for and won their independence, and a series of new nations emerged.

## TAKING NOTES

**Summarizing** Use a chart to summarize the major challenges that Southeast Asian countries faced after independence.

Nation	Challenges Following Independence
The Philippines	
Burma	
Indonesia	

## The Philippines Achieves Independence

The Philippines became the first of the world's colonies to achieve independence following World War II. The United States granted the Philippines independence in 1946, on the anniversary of its own Declaration of Independence, the Fourth of July.

**The United States and the Philippines** The Filipinos' immediate goals were to rebuild the economy and to restore the capital of Manila. The city had been badly damaged in World War II. The United States had promised the Philippines \$620 million in war damages. However, the U.S. government insisted that Filipinos approve the Bell Act in order to get the money. This act would establish free trade between the United States and the Philippines for eight years, to be followed by gradually increasing tariffs. Filipinos were worried that American businesses would exploit the resources and environment of the Philippines. In spite of this concern, Filipinos approved the Bell Act and received their money.

The United States also wanted to maintain its military presence in the Philippines. With the onset of the Cold War (see Chapter 33), the United States needed to protect its interests in Asia. Both China and the Soviet Union were rivals of the United States at the time. Both were Pacific powers with bases close to allies of the United States and to resources vital to U.S. interests. Therefore, the United States demanded a 99-year lease on its military and naval bases in the Philippines. The bases, Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base near Manila, proved to be critical to the United States later in the staging of the Korean and Vietnam wars.



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Location** Which former Dutch colony is made up of a series of islands spread out from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean?
- Region** From what European country did the most colonies shown above gain their independence?

### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**A** Why might the United States have been interested in maintaining military bases in the Philippines?

These military bases also became the single greatest source of conflict between the United States and the Philippines. Many Filipinos regarded the bases as proof of American imperialism. Later agreements shortened the terms of the lease, and the United States gave up both bases in 1992. **A**

After World War II, the Philippine government was still almost completely dependent on the United States economically and politically. The Philippine government looked for ways to lessen this dependency. It welcomed Japanese investments. It also broadened its contacts with Southeast Asian neighbors and with nonaligned nations.

**From Marcos to Ramos** **Ferdinand Marcos** was elected president of the Philippines in 1965. The country suffered under his rule from 1966 to 1986. Marcos imposed an authoritarian regime and stole millions of dollars from the public treasury. Although the constitution limited Marcos to eight years in office, he got around this restriction by imposing martial law from 1972 to 1981. Two years later, his chief opponent, Benigno Aquino, Jr., was assassinated as he returned from the United States to the Philippines, lured by the promise of coming elections.

In the elections of 1986, Aquino's widow, **Corazón Aquino**, challenged Marcos. Aquino won decisively, but Marcos refused to acknowledge her victory. When he declared himself the official winner, a public outcry resulted. He was forced into exile in Hawaii, where he later died. In 1995, the Philippines succeeded in recovering \$475 million Marcos had stolen from his country and deposited in Swiss banks.

As she took the oath of office, Aquino promised to usher in a more open and democratic form of government.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

I pledge a government dedicated to upholding truth and justice, morality and decency in government, freedom and democracy. I ask our people not to relax, but to maintain more vigilance in this, our moment of triumph. The Motherland can't thank them enough, yet we all realize that more is required of each of us to achieve a truly just society for our people. This is just the beginning.

CORAZÓN AQUINO, inaugural speech, Feb. 24, 1986

During Aquino's presidency, the Philippine government ratified a new constitution. It also negotiated successfully with the United States to end the lease on the U.S. military bases. In 1992, Fidel V. Ramos succeeded Aquino as president. Ramos was restricted by the constitution to a single six-year term. The single-term limit is intended to prevent the abuse of power that occurred during Marcos's 20-year rule.

**The Government Battles Rebels** Since gaining its independence, the Philippines has had to battle its own separatist group. For centuries, the southern part of the country has been a stronghold of Muslims known as the Moros. In the early 1970s, a group of Moros formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). They began an armed struggle for independence from Philippine rule.

In 1996, the government and rebels agreed to a cease-fire, and the Moros were granted an autonomous region in the southern Philippines. The agreement, however, did not satisfy a splinter group of the MNLF called Abu Sayyaf. These rebels have continued fighting the government, often using terror tactics to try to achieve their goals. In 2000, they kidnapped 21 people including foreign tourists. While the group eventually was freed, subsequent kidnappings by Abu Sayyaf have resulted in the death of several hostages. The current Philippines president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, has launched an all-out military response to this group. The United States has provided military assistance to the government's efforts.

## HistoryMakers



**Aung San Suu Kyi**  
1945–

Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her efforts to establish democracy in Myanmar. She could not accept the award in person, however, because she was still under house arrest.

The Nobel Prize committee said that in awarding her the peace prize, it intended:

*to show its support for the many people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights, and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means. Suu Kyi's struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades.*

## British Colonies Gain Independence

Britain's timetable for granting independence to its Southeast Asian colonies depended on local circumstances. Burma had been pressing for independence from Britain for decades. It became a sovereign republic in 1948. In 1989, Burma was officially named Myanmar (myahn•MAH), its name in the Burmese language.

**Burma Experiences Turmoil** After gaining freedom, Burma suffered one political upheaval after another. Its people struggled between repressive military governments and pro-democracy forces. Conflict among Communists and ethnic minorities also disrupted the nation. In 1962, General Ne Win set up a military government, with the goal of making Burma a socialist state. Although Ne Win stepped down in 1988, the military continued to rule repressively.

In 1988, [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) (owng sahn soo chee) returned to Burma after many years abroad. She is the

**Vocabulary**

*House arrest* is confinement to one's quarters, or house, rather than to prison.

daughter of Aung San, a leader of the Burmese nationalists' army killed years before by political rivals. Aung San Suu Kyi became active in the newly formed National League for Democracy. For her pro-democracy activities, she was placed under house arrest for six years by the government. In the 1990 election—the country's first multiparty election in 30 years—the National League for Democracy won 80 percent of the seats. The military government refused to recognize the election, and it kept Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. She was finally released in 1995, only to be placed under house arrest again in 2000. Freed in 2002, she was detained again in 2003, leaving many residents to doubt whether Burma will embrace democracy anytime soon.

**Malaysia and Singapore** During World War II, the Japanese conquered the Malay Peninsula, formerly ruled by the British. The British returned to the peninsula after the Japanese defeat in 1945. They tried, unsuccessfully, to organize the different peoples of Malaya into one state. They also struggled to put down a Communist uprising. Ethnic groups resisted British efforts to unite their colonies on the peninsula and in the northern part of the island of Borneo. Malays were a slight majority on the peninsula, while Chinese were the largest group on the southern tip, the island of Singapore.

In 1957, officials created the Federation of Malaya from Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, and Sabah. The two regions—on the Malay Peninsula and on northern Borneo—were separated by 400 miles of ocean. In 1965, Singapore separated from the federation and became an independent city-state. The federation, consisting of Malaya, Sarawak, and Sabah, became known as Malaysia. A coalition of many ethnic groups maintained steady economic progress in Malaysia.

Singapore, which has one of the busiest ports in the world, has become an extremely prosperous nation. Lee Kuan Yew ruled Singapore as prime minister from 1959 to 1990. Under his guidance, Singapore emerged as a banking center as well as a center of trade. It had a standard of living far higher than any of its Southeast Asian neighbors. In 1997, the Geneva World Economic Forum listed the world's strongest economies. Singapore topped the list. It was followed, in order, by Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Great Britain. **B**

▼ A glittering skyline rises above the bustling harbor of Singapore.

**MAIN IDEA****Making Inferences**

**B** What do the top economies listed by the Geneva World Economic Forum have in common?



## Indonesia Gains Independence from the Dutch

Like members of other European nations, the Dutch, who ruled the area of Southeast Asia known as Indonesia, saw their colonial empire crumble with the onset of World War II. The Japanese conquered the region and destroyed the Dutch colonial order. When the war ended and the defeated Japanese were forced to leave, the people of Indonesia moved to establish a free nation.

**Sukarno Leads the Independence Movement** Leading the effort to establish an independent Indonesia was **Sukarno** (soo•KAHR•noh), known only by his one name. In August 1945, two days after the Japanese surrendered, Sukarno proclaimed Indonesia's independence and named himself president. A guerrilla army backed him. The Dutch, supported initially by Britain and the United States, attempted to regain control of Indonesia. But after losing the support of the United Nations and the United States, the Dutch agreed to grant Indonesia its independence in 1949.

The new Indonesia became the world's fourth most populous nation. It consisted of more than 13,600 islands, with 300 different ethnic groups, 250 languages, and most of the world's major religions. It contained the world's largest Islamic population. Sukarno, who took the official title of "life-time president," attempted to guide this diverse nation in a parliamentary democracy.

**Instability and Turmoil** Sukarno's efforts to build a stable democratic nation were unsuccessful. He was not able to manage Indonesia's economy, and the country slid downhill rapidly. Foreign banks refused to lend money to Indonesia and inflation occasionally soared as high as one thousand percent. In 1965, a group of junior army officers attempted a coup. A general named **Suharto** (suh•HAHR•toh) put down the rebellion. He then seized power for himself and began a bloodbath in which 500,000 to 1 million Indonesians were killed.

Suharto, officially named president in 1967, turned Indonesia into a police state and imposed frequent periods of martial law. Outside observers heavily criticized him for his annexation of nearby East Timor in 1976 and for human rights violations there. (See the map on page 1005.) Suharto's government also showed little tolerance for religious freedoms.

Bribery and corruption became commonplace. The economy improved under Suharto for a while but from 1997 through 1998 the nation suffered one of the worst financial crises in its history. Growing unrest over both government repression and a crippling economic crisis prompted Suharto to step down in 1998. While turmoil continued to grip the country, it moved slowly toward democracy. The daughter of Sukarno, Megawati Sukarnoputri, was elected to the presidency in 2001.

Upon taking office, the new president hailed the virtues of democracy and urged her fellow Indonesians to do what they could to maintain such a form of government:



### PRIMARY SOURCE

Democracy requires sincerity and respect for the rules of the game. Beginning my duty, I urge all groups to sincerely and openly accept the outcome of the democratic process . . . In my opinion, respect for the people's voice, sincerity in accepting it, and respect for the rules of game are the main pillars of democracy which we will further develop. I urge all Indonesians to look forward to the future and unite to improve the life and our dignity as a nation.


MEGAWATI SUKARNOPUTRI, July 23, 2001

### Vocabulary

A *coup* is the sudden overthrow of a government by a small group of people.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Primary Sources

 What are the cornerstones of democracy, according to Sukarnoputri?

Sukarnoputri faces enormous challenges, including a still-fragile economy, ethnic strife, security problems, and a government still hobbled by corruption.

**East Timor Wins Independence** As Indonesia worked to overcome its numerous obstacles, it lost control of East Timor. Indonesian forces had ruled the land with brutal force since Suharto seized it in the 1970s. The East Timorese, however, never stopped pushing to regain their freedom. Jose Ramos Horta, an East Timorese independence campaigner, won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize (along with East Timor's Roman Catholic bishop) for his efforts to gain independence for the region without violence.

In a United Nations-sponsored referendum held in August 1999, the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence. The election angered pro-Indonesian forces in the region. They ignored the referendum results and went on a bloody rampage. They killed hundreds and forced thousands into refugee camps in West Timor, which is a part of Indonesia. UN intervention forces eventually brought peace to the area. In 2002 East Timor celebrated independence.

As on the Indian subcontinent, violence and struggle were part of the transition in Southeast Asia from colonies to free nations. The same would be true in Africa, where numerous former colonies shed European rule and created independent countries in the wake of World War II.



▲ East Timorese celebrate their overwhelming vote for independence in 1999.

## SECTION

## 2

## ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Ferdinand Marcos
- Corazón Aquino
- Aung San Suu Kyi
- Sukarno
- Suharto

### USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which nation faced the greatest challenges? Why?

Nation	Challenges Following Independence
The Philippines	
Burma	
Indonesia	

### MAIN IDEAS

3. Why did the retention of U.S. military bases in the Philippines so anger Filipinos?
4. What was the outcome of the 1990 Myanmar election? How did the government respond?
5. How did Suharto come to power in Indonesia?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **CLARIFYING** How did World War II play a role in the eventual decolonization of Southeast Asia?
7. **MAKING INFERENCES** Why do you think that the United States demanded a 99-year lease on military and naval bases in the Philippines?
8. **COMPARING AND CONTRASTING** What was similar and different about the elections that brought defeat to the ruling governments in the Philippines and in Burma?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **ECONOMICS** Write a two-paragraph **expository essay** contrasting Singapore's economy with others in Southeast Asia.

### CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A TELEVISION NEWS SCRIPT

Locate several of the most recent news articles about one of the countries discussed in this section. Combine the stories into a brief television **news script** and present it to the class.